



ESO Advocate Code of Ethics

DVA has endorsed this Code of Ethics to guide the principles, values and behaviours expected of advocates trained under the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP).

1. General Principles

- a. The ATDP is a partnership between ex-service organisations (ESOs) and the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA). It is managed by DVA.
- b. Advocates are required to conform to high standards of personal and professional behaviour in their dealings with current and former members of the Australian Defence Force and their families, colleagues, DVA staff and staff of other departments or agencies.
- c. Advocates are accountable, that is, they are responsible to their clients and answerable to their ESO for the services and advice that they provide. When acting on a client's behalf, advocates must understand and comply with all applicable legislation and ESO practices.

2. Personal and Professional Behaviour

In all of their actions, advocates must:

- a. cooperate with DVA staff in any dealings with a client's claim or issue
- b. not impose political opinions or religious beliefs on clients, colleagues or staff; and not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, religion or social status
- c. not provide services or advice while under the influence of alcohol, illicit drugs, or prescription medication that may affect their cognitive ability
- d. treat everyone with courtesy and respect; and refrain from swearing, abuse and offensive or threatening behaviour
- e. not use social media or other public forums to air grievances concerning their work
- f. comply with any complaints-handling procedures established by their ESO, and
- g. not charge a service fee or solicit donations for services they are providing, other than the permitted fee under Veteran' Indemnity Training Association guidelines for administrative costs relating directly to the handling of a case.



3. Knowledge and Managing Information

In providing services or advice, advocates must:

- a. only undertake work to the level at which they have been accredited under the ATDP
- b. act on their client's instructions and, in doing so, act lawfully and in the best interests of the client; and request and/or disclose personal information of the client only in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988
- c. give full, accurate and truthful information to clients and DVA in relation to pensions, benefits and services
- d. create a client file and, as each case progresses, maintain a log of events and include any information or advice given to the client and any notes made relating to the case; the case notes should also clearly state the name and address of the client, the name of the ESO and of the advocate
- e. ensure client files are accessible to another advocate if the advocate is likely to be absent from the workplace for an extended period
- f. keep personal information secure and not disclose information to a third party without the expressed consent of the client, unless there is a legal duty to so, and
- g. commit to maintaining knowledge and skills by active engagement in a Community of Practice and continual professional development.